Dear Richard, 2/27/94

Yesterday I spent from 1 until 3 at the neaby Walden bookstore, by prearrangement, to autograph books, Selections. I pass on what I observed.

I liked the cover very much as soon as I saw it. All the few comments I've gotten are from those who liked it, some very much.

There was no sign announcing to mall traffic that I'd be there, none on the table with books on it when I got there. About a week earlier I'd gone to the nearby radio station during my early-morning walking and there was a brief announcement before 5 a.m. that I'd be there. Not many listening to AM radio that time of the morning around here.

When I got to Waldens there was a small cluster of people around the table. They all knew of me and my work. They had all seen me on TV shows. They all wanted to talk and all but one bought a book and asked me to autograph it. In the midsts of this a young couple entered the store. The woman ~~asked~~ got a book, paid for it and brought it back, asking me to autograph it to her mother. By then all or almost all the others had left. She had noticed my name of the book and remembered me from TV shows. Of those who stopped and spoke to me one man before leaving said he'd be back but he hadn't the money with him for it because of the shopping he had to do. It was not, I think, a good day for people who were not there to do shopping because it happens there was an auto show in the main ~~corid~~ corridor.

From the time this group left, not another single person stopped. A fair number of those walking past glanced at the cover, apparently attracted by the JFK likeness. This is true also of those who entered the store. The table was arranged so they could not miss the books or me. They had to walk on one side or the other to get in. For about two hours not a single person stopped to talk to me or to pick a book up. I have no way of evaluating the normal traffic in that store but it seemed to me not to be bad.

As I noted the lack of interest I thought about it and watched the people glancing more. I believe all they noticed was the JFK likeness. I have no way of knowing whether they read the title. But I formed the impression that it was the JFK likeness that caught their eye and that it did no more than that.

To the degree that valid opinions can be based on this one experience I believe that what is important on a cover is not JFK but the assassination. I think his likeness did nothing for the book, and that surprised me very much. It is opposite what my mail reflects. But my mail is not a cross-section of society. It is from those who are interested only.

This experience led me to believe that something like the subtitle on my draft will be important for the cover and that it should be prominent, telling at a glance that it is an assassination book. It also suggests that for mere glimpses the attractiveness of the cover may not be the most important quality for a cover on this subject at least.

Best, Harold